

99th Transportation Squadron driven to succeed

**By Tech. Sgt. Rich Covington
AWFC Public Affairs**

Nellis has the busiest and largest active fleet of vehicles in the Air Force. Its members manage a fleet of more than 2,000 vehicles and transport over 250,000 people at least a half-million miles each year.

“This is a huge operation,” Master Sgt. Rodney Allison, 99th Transportation Squadron fleet manager, said about the 99th Trans Vehicle Operations Flight. “The volume and scope of missions we support is diverse.”

Supporting Red Flag exercises is transportation’s biggest feat. Red Flag may last one to two months, yet people rotate in and out every two weeks. Every other weekend, as more than 1,000 people arrive for an exercise, another 1,000 are leaving. “All of these people need transportation,” said Master Sgt. James Dillon, 99th Trans vehicle operations superintendent.

“When people arrive, they’re concerned about where to sleep, how to get around and how to get what’s needed,” Staff Sgt. Roy Young, 414th Combat Training Squadron Red Flag Transportation, said about the huge numbers of people that come to Nellis for Red Flag. He and Staff Sgt. Dameon Jackson, assistant vehicle manager, work closely with 99th Trans up to 45 days before a Red Flag, making sure participants have transportation and get what they need.

99th Trans provides more than 60 government vehicles and an additional 80 commercial leased vehicles in support of all flag exercises. 99th Trans also provides Red Flag participants transportation to and from the local airport and hotels. “During Red Flag it’s common to have 14 buses running passengers and baggage the entire day,” Sgt. Allison said.

The squadron will also haul participants’ equipment from the flightline to their work areas. And they can move a fire truck from Nellis to the ranges

on the Red Flag portion of the Nevada Test and Training Range for use during Red Flags.

“99th Trans plays a pivotal part in the success of Red Flag,” Sgt. Young said. “There would be no Red Flag without transportation.”

Like Red Flag, 99th Trans supports participants coming here for exercises such as Air Warrior, the recent Joint Expeditionary Force Experiment and the Joint Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses exercise. They also drive four dedicated flightline taxis to transport aircrews and passengers to and from aircraft. Off the flightline, they provide two on-call base taxis for the base population and, five days a week, three buses and their drivers transport inmates to and from the Nellis Federal Prison.

The squadron also has 257 vehicles for people wanting to drive themselves, said Sgt. Allison. Every year almost 3,000 people will check out vehicles.

The unit oversees more than 80 long-term leased vehicles, costing more than \$500,000, and another 1,000 short-term leases yearly. They help flightline units manage and maintain more than 65 government vehicles.

Transportation also plays a pivotal part in operations on the Nevada Test and Training Range. They regularly transport military members to Silver Flag Alpha, where intensive ground training for security forces and other services takes place at Indian Springs Air Force Auxiliary Field.

Range support also includes the quarterly live-fire demos. Transportation will ferry more than 300 people back and forth from Nellis to the range 50 miles away, and then hundreds more to and from the grandstands and the entry control point parking lot.

Transportation members shined during the 1999 Nellis Air Show. Transportation contracted out more than 40 buses and used an additional 14 Air Force buses to transport 150,000 people to and from the air show parking lot at the nearby Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

The mission at Nellis draws thousands of distinguished visitors yearly. 99th Trans established a Squadron Distinguished Visitor Operations section to handle the base’s distinguished visitors. They support Air Warfare Center Protocol and Public Affairs activities transporting distinguished visitors.

“Its amazing,” said Senior Master Sgt. Donald Corbin, 99th Transportation Squadron Vehicle Maintenance Flight vehicle maintenance superintendent, when talking about the work his people put into keeping the vehicles running.

“It’s the busiest (stateside) base I’ve been at,” Sgt. Corbin said about his 22-year Air Force vehicle maintenance career.

Out of hardship comes ingenuity. The 99th Trans did a complete renovation of six aging late 1970s to early 1990s Air Force buses at \$57,000 each. A contractor replaced engines, brakes, transmissions and interiors in these buses to make them like new. According to Master Sgt. Corbin, this saved the base from having to buy new buses, which could cost anywhere from \$200,000 to \$500,000 each.

The vehicle operations and maintenance flights perform their vital missions with a young crew. Half of the vehicle operations and maintenance flights are made up of first-term airmen new to the career field.

According to Sgt. Corbin this makes it difficult because these airmen need to go to school while the more experienced airmen and NCOs are subject to deployments. “We (vehicle maintenance) have more than 15 people deployed at any given time.

“It’s a challenge – yet a testimony to the young troops out there,” Sgt. Corbin said.



Above left, Airman 1st Class Matthew Thrune and Airman Jaime Guerra, both with the 99th Trans, are installing a new engine in one of the vehicles. Every repair from minor to major can be diagnosed and fixed right here at Nellis.



Photos by Airman 1st Class Ashley Sorrels

Airman 1st Class Stacey Schabot, 99th Trans, works on a vehicle.



Left, Airman 1st. Class Richard Santana, 99th Trans, checks the oil level of a vehicle. As part of the daily maintenance schedule, all vehicles are checked prior to turn in. Above, the “Wrecker” tows a vehicle in for repairs. Right, Senior Airman Jim Tomlinson ensures keys are in the correct location for distribution to customers. Strict accountability allows accurate tracking of vehicles at all times.

